

Frequently Asked Questions

Oral Vaccines – Who Can Administer?

May 2008

Can health care assistants administer oral vaccines?

June 12, 2008 they can administer vaccines with the proper delegation and supervision. This can be done by injection, orally, topically, or by nasal administration.

Can health care assistants administer oral medications?

No they cannot. The 2008 legislation did not include oral medications.

Who can prescribe the oral rotavirus vaccine?

Many health care providers licensed in Washington are authorized to prescribe and administer oral medications, including the rotavirus vaccine. These providers are physicians, physician assistants, osteopathic physicians, osteopathic physician assistants, advanced registered nurse practitioners and naturopathic doctors.

Can these health care providers also administer the oral rotavirus vaccine?

Yes. All of the providers with authority to prescribe can also administer the vaccine.

Can these health care providers delegate the administration of the oral rotavirus vaccine to other personnel?

These providers can delegate the administration of vaccines to other health care practitioners with a scope of practice that allows the administration of oral medicine. The delegation can be to registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, nursing technologists (nursing students, if oral administration has been covered in their education and training), and health care assistants starting June 12, 2008.

What health care tasks can be delegated to a health care assistant?

The general rule is that health care tasks can only be delegated to another health provider if the task falls within the scope of practice for that provider. Health care assistants may perform blood draws, certain injections, and oral vaccines as delegated health care tasks.

My clinic employs medical assistants. How are they different than health care assistants?

We are aware of training courses and examinations that offer program certification. There is also a national certification as a “medical assistant.” In Washington “medical assistant” is not a credentialed health care profession. Someone with a medical assistant certification cannot legally perform any task that is the practice of medicine unless that person also holds a health profession credential issued by the state. Medical assistants that are not credentialed as a health care provider with the Washington State Department of Health (department) should not administer oral medications of any kind, including oral vaccines.

Many medical assistants use their training to obtain a health care assistant credential. We

support those efforts. A medical assistant who obtains a health care assistant credential with the department is limited to those tasks allowed in the health care assistant scope of practice.

Can a medical assistant hand the oral rotavirus vaccine to a parent who then gives it to a child?

No. Handing the vaccine to a parent is considered dispensing. Under Washington law, a health care practitioner can only dispense medicine if the practitioner is also allowed to prescribe the medicine. Medical assistants cannot “hand over” or dispense the oral rotavirus vaccine because they are not allowed to prescribe.

Can naturopaths administer the oral rotavirus?

Yes. Vaccines are within the scope of practice for naturopaths.

What is the health care assistant scope of practice?

A health care assistant credential is required if a health care facility or health care practitioner is authorizing an employee to perform any of the following: venous and capillary blood draw, arterial blood draw, intradermal (including skin tests), subcutaneous, and intramuscular injections for diagnostic or therapeutic agents, intravenous injections for diagnostic or therapeutic agents, hemodialysis, and oral vaccines.

The following are types of job titles or professions that may legally perform duties within the certified health care assistant scope of practice, and those that may not legally perform duties. This is not an all inclusive list of professions and job titles.

Job Title/ Description	May perform duties	May not perform duties
Cardiovascular Technician		X
Health Care Assistant	X	
Laboratory Technician		X
Medical Assistant		X
Certified Medical Assistant		X
Medical Doctor	X	
Naturopathic Doctor	X	
Practical Nurse	X	
Registered Nurse	X	
Nursing Assistant Certified or Registered		X
Phlebotomist		X
Radiologic Technologists	X	
Respiratory Care Practitioner	X	
Surgical Technician		X
X-Ray Technician		X

A person must have a health care assistant credential from the department if they are performing any duties as outlined in the scope of practice for health care assistant. All job titles/descriptions shown above that fall under the **“may not perform duties”** must hold a health care assistant, or other health care credential, in order to perform the duties.

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